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ABSTRACT

Sojourners, people who stay for a period of time in countries of which they are not natives, sometimes may encounter communication situations for which they are not prepared. A program seems necessary whereby people living in nonfamiliar cultures can learn to interpret cultural idiosyncrasies inherent in communication patterns and to function as more effective communicators within the foreign culture. To ensure a match between program content and participant needs, this paper contends that a successful program for sojourners should be based upon a phenomenological perspective, one that aligns the training curriculum with the needs that the sojourners themselves and others with the sojourners' viewpoint have expressed. To develop this point, the paper examines (1) the interrelationship between culture and communication, (2) the nature of existing orientation programs (their theoretical bases and the methodologies they use), (3) the existing programs, and (4) a proposal for a phenomenological approach to developing sojourner-orientation programs. (RL)

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A Proposal for a Phenomenological Approach to Developing Orientation Programs

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The relationship between communication and culture has been examined by researchers from a number of disciplines, notably anthropology, sociology, linguistics, and in recent years, speech communication. Concern for this area has increased as it becomes more evident that culturally different people are being brought into contact with one another at every level of society. The impact of their contact and the situations surrounding the intercultural context create a unique set of problems to be considered.

The "sojourner" or one who stays for a period of time in a country that is not native to him or her, has become commonplace throughout the world. In many instances, the permanent residents are so accustomed to their presence that difficulties which the sojourners may experience in communication situations will be ignored or misunderstood. When plunged into a new culture, most of the familiar signposts of behavior are stripped away and the sojourner may be unprepared to deal with messages to which his or her reactions are inappropriate (Barna, 1972). An awareness of their particular needs raises the question whether or not procedures can be taken to facilitate intercultural understanding. More specifically, we need a program that would enable one in a nonfamiliar culture to function as a more effective communicator. To ensure a match between program content and participant needs, this paper contends that a successful program should be based upon a phenomenological perspective. To develop this point, we will examine 1) the interrelationship between culture and communication, 2) the nature of existing orientation programs, 3) a critique of the existing programs, and 4) a proposal for a phenomenological approach to developing orientation programs.

Role of Culture in Communication

Edward Hall, who conducted pioneer research in the nonverbal aspects of cross-cultural communication, argues that it is impossible for a person to divest himself or herself of cultural habits, for culture penetrates deep into the roots of an individual's personality (1966). Culture influences one's social perceptions and, to a great extent, how the world is viewed. Intercultural communication occurs whenever the participants in an act of communication have backgrounds which reflect differing systems of group experiences, value structures, and collective knowledge (Porter & Samovar, 1972). A primary concern of the relatively new area of study called intercultural communication is with training individuals so as to facilitate successful communication between members of diverse cultures. Much of this task involves creating an awareness in people of the cultural factors affecting communication. Newmark and Asante (1975) contend that by recognizing the effects of socialization and traditions on one's own actions, a better understanding of the cultural influences upon others can be reached; as a result one becomes freer to try out new patterns of behavior in his or her own life. This is an underlying principle of cultural orientation programs.

The belief that people can adapt to major cultural changes through a learning process raises a number of theoretical and practical issues. To as great an extent as possible, training involves extracting the cultural dimension from the communication situation, and presenting its features in a demonstrable format. Drawing from approaches developed primarily from research in social psychology and education, orientation

programs focus upon the cultural component in communication. How this component is isolated by the researcher and subsequently presented to the sojourner, will be discussed in the following section.

Existing Orientation Programs

A review of the literature with regard to extant programs can be divided into three areas: 1) theoretical bases for their establishment, 2) methodologies used to distinguish and teach cultural characteristics, and 3) descriptions of actual programs.

Theoretical Bases of Training Programs

Theory in intercultural communication suggests three principles in the construction of orientation programs. These are that characteristic features of a culture can be discovered by researchers and taught to non-natives, that orientation programs should emphasize the learning of the host culture, and that effective communication is dependent upon shared understanding.

The belief that common cultural characteristics exist within nations was the foundation for Yousef and Briggs' "schema" for training overseas personnel in communication (1975). Their program, designed for North American businesses, government agencies, and cultural organizations engaged in multinational activities, was aimed at developing appropriate communication behavior for members involved in cross-cultural situations. As a point of departure for their training, a schema was created that contrasted and classified a wide range of culturally determined behavior in North America and "traditional" societies. A sample comparison between

the two cultures can be seen by looking at the variable, "social values." In North American cultures the nuclear family, individual autonomy, and the secondary role of religion are indicative of social values. The extended family, individual restriction, and the importance of religion are representative of social values held by members of Eastern and Arabic cultures.

The numerous variables that Yousef and Briggs discuss in their schema are used as referents throughout the orientation sessions. The theoretical principle behind the training is that effective communication requires a knowledge of the host culture's basic orientation toward life and "the place of the individual in this scheme of existence" (Yousef & Briggs, 1975, p. 15).

The notion that effective communication requires knowledge of the culture has been extended by Fieg and Blair (1975) who suggest that cultural knowledge can be imparted to non-natives. The goal of culture learning is to become aware of, to identify, and to accept the differences in thought patterns, life styles, and goals of peoples from around the world. It prepares one to understand an individual's behavior in an unfamiliar cultural context. Starosta (1975), in reviewing Fieg and Blair's work, sees their four major premises as defining a method, or "tool" for culture learning:

> (1) Similarities among the inhabitants of a given nation-state run deeply enough to constitute a common culture. Idiosyncratic differences or pan-national similarities exist, but they are seldom so overriding as to deny the presence of a single active cultural heritage; (2) Experiential observations collected from

> other-culture individuals will define the American culture out of a sense of contrast with one's own cultural heritage; (3) These experiences may be content analyzed, after a fashion, to draw out a number of themes which best define the American culture; and (4) These themes have some utility for culture learners, especially for a sojourner who, in the space of a single week, wishes an intensive introduction to American ways. (p. 117)

Saral (1972) maintained that "to facilitate meaningful communication, one must not only learn the cultural code of a people," i.e., the set of assumptions and values they hold as a group, "but also the communication code, i.e., the ways in which the behavior patterns communicate meaning" (p. 2). Gorden (1975) attributed the success of a message to the communicators' awareness of one another's set of beliefs and behavioral code, as well as their having a common vocabulary, syntax, and grammar. Using a team of interviewers and participant-observers, Gorden studied the interaction between North American students and Peace Corps trainees, and the Latin Americans with whom they communicated in Bogota, Colombia. Their first step was to discover examples of miscommunication of meaning, and to distinguish between those caused by the North Americans' insufficient knowledge of Spanish and those caused by nonlinguistic differences. The purpose of the research was to find patterns of communication behavior indicating primary cultural differences between North Americans and Latin Americans. While this may have been accomplished, the research was somewhat thwarted because Gorden and his team did not know the degree of universality of cultural behaviors within the society.

Methodologies in Orientation Programming

Non-native researchers. It is evident from this last section that researchers involved in intercultural training rely heavily upon a knowledge of the values held in their own cultures, as well as in those

that they are studying. The actual methodology used to discover behavioral patterns and values is varied. Some (Cathcart and Cathcart, 1976; Morsbach, 1976; Taylor, 1975) have researched different aspects of culture through personal observation and intense study. Taylor spent thousands of hours watching and recording behavioral activities in diverse settings. The data he compiled was used to define potentially misunderstood nonverbal communication, e.g., the Japanese nod to show attention but Americans would probably misinterpret this head movement to mean approval. Van Zandt's study (1972) of negotiation practices in Japan was based on his own personal experiences as Senior Officer for International Telephone and Telegraph in Tokyo. He singles out thirteen features of behavior including emotional sensitivity and hiding of emotions, that are evident in Japanese culture. Van Zandt then relates the awareness of these characteristics to an understanding of negotiating in Japan.

Native researchers. Studies by persons writing about their own cultures to further the purposes of intercultural understanding (Doi, 1973; Nishiyama, 1971, 1975), have also contributed to the knowledge of values and behaviors. Due to the tremendous international expansion of Japanese trade, the Japanese have become very involved in intercultural research. Doi directs his discussion on "amae," (loosely translated as the longing for dependency or belongingness among the Japanese), toward showing how the concept "pervades and actually makes Japanese patterns of communication" (p. 181). Nishiyama (1971) states that his major concern is to introduce what he terms "the national rhetoric" (p. 148)

of his country to other cultures. From his experience at the Japan-American Institute of Management Sciences in training junior executives headed for assignment in foreign countries, he cautions that teachers should first assess the influence of the native culture on the students' ability to develop oral competence (1975). He cites three Japanese traits that make the learning of oral English particularly difficult: 1) the vertical societal structure in Japan inhibits open teacher-student interaction in the classroom; 2) the Japanese tend to avoid speaking in public; and 3) they are extremely conscious of face-saving and avoiding public embarrassment. This kind of information will most probably be used by non-native researchers to make predictions involving Japanese behaviors.

Establishing values. Sitaram's study (1977) attempts to discover common values through surveying the beliefs that a group of people hold. Borrowing Piaget's concepts (1969) of signifiers and significates, his premise is that values (signifiers or the basic concepts in a person's intellectual development) are reflected in people's choices and beliefs (which are significates or the symbols of value structures). By interviewing a population sample of 100 male and female respondents of Caucasian, Japanese, and other backgrounds living in Honolulu, and 400 male and female respondents of Black, Caucasian, and other backgrounds living in Chicago, Sitaram hoped to find common cultural values that could be labeled "American." A list of concepts (significates) symbolizing possible values was prepared. To test the existence of the primary value, "human dignity," subjects were asked whether they agreed with the

statement of belief that "all men are equal, no matter where they live and what their skin color is," and whether they thought that "the dignity of all men should be recognized" (p. 12). Answers having a two-thirds majority were then considered to be sufficient criterion for whether a concept reflected a value. Sitaram's methodology reveals distinct problems that appear in other value gathering studies as well. The first concerns the generalizability of the research conclusions; were the subjects used representative of the entire population, in this case of American society as a whole? The second problem concerns internal validity: how accurate were the simple statements used on the tests in revealing complex value structures in a society? One might also consider the existence of a multiplicity of meanings for concepts labeled "equality" and "dignity," or whether they are in fact equivalent in value.

Descriptions of Actual Teaching Programs

Despite questions concerning the applicability of these findings, those responsible for intercultural training continue to utilize the cultural patterns of values and behaviors as the foundation upon which to build their training programs. The introduction of differing value systems is the focal point around which exercises are constructed. The literature seems to indicate a greater tendency towards experientially-based training (Ackermann, 1976; Nishiyama, 1975; Saral, 1972; Trifonovitch, 1972; Yousef & Briggs, 1975), instead of more cognitive-oriented techniques (lectures and handbooks categorizing food, lifestyle, and dress habits). Trifonovitch writes that culture is more effectively learned on the "affective" level than on the "cognitive" level (p. 39).

In the program he conducts at the East West Center, trainees are introduced to the basic cultural values of the nation where they have been assigned through a number of activities: group discussions that are designed to clarify their own cultural perceptions, exposure to situations resembling ones they will encounter upon arrival, and tactics that "shock" the participants into realizing the strangeness of the culture they will be entering and the bias of the one to which they belong. Roleplaying and simulation exercises are frequently utilized by Trifonovitch and others to help the participant internalize the information learned during training. Both Trifonovitch and March (1975) stress the ongoing nature of orientation; at the close of the official orientation program, the trainees should be aware that much remains to be learned about life in the new culture. This process theoretically continues throughout the time of the sojourn, possibly culminating in the newly established re-entry seminars, designed to orient the individual towards returning to his or her home culture.

Abstract goals of programs. A corollary interest of researchers in intercultural training is in creating a conceptually ideal person who readily adjusts, and effectively communicates, in any cultural situation. Bochner's (1973) "mediating" person and Adler's (1976) "multicultural" person are ideal persons whose identities and loyalties transcend national boundaries and whose flexibility allows them to "depend more on the necessities of experience rather than on the predispositions of a given culture" (Adler, 1976, p. 369). These attributes enable them to act as facilitators, or mediators, between cultures. Bochner evaluated

whether mediator characteristics had been developed in anyone who had been trained at the East West Center. From a series of interviews with 69 alumni, he found that the academic demands placed on students, along with their personal concerns, left little time for them to seek multicultural contact and understanding. Upon returning to their home countries, they reverted back to being "basically monocultural, upper middle class, materialistic, and conservative" in attitude (p. 36). Bochner stresses that these results were based on an earlier type of orientation program and not on the "problem-centered" training adopted in recent years. Though a follow-up study has not been conducted, it is hoped that the new curriculum, with its emphasis on personal growth and cultural relativism (the principle that one cannot evaluate or judge a particular culture by standards developed in another culture), will be more effective in preparing men and women to be transcultural in their outlooks.

Critique of Existing Orientation Programs

Three major problem areas will be distinguished in the analysis of current programs: 1) those pertaining to specific programmatic problems; 2) those stemming from certain methodological considerations; and 3) those generated by the adherence to a significant philosophical assumption.

Programmatic Problems

Lack of feedback with regard to program effectiveness. The research is especially strong in stating the case for the need for orientation programs, however, there is an evident vacuum of information (with the exception of Bochner, 1973) relating to their effect on individuals who

have completed training. Some mention of feedback is made by Brislin (1979) but it is principally referring to the immediate response of the trainees to what they have experienced in their particular program rather than to the perceived effectiveness of the training after entering the new country. Any evaluation of the curricula and the motivations behind training would be enhanced by knowing how effective the program is in the field.

In the literature, there was no mention of any comparative analysis conducted among programs. Besides helping to measure effectiveness, comparative studies could be beneficial in answering other research questions: Is the optimum location for a program in the host culture, the sojourner's own country, or some halfway point like the East West Center in Hawaii? What type of environment is most conducive to culture learning? When is the best strategic period for administering training?

Coordination of sojourn phases with training. Little investigation has been conducted to determine what portions of training can be adapted specifically to the various stages that the sojourner passes through during a stay in another culture. Trifonovitch (1977) describes these stages as the honeymoon, or what Gorden (1968) terms a "euphoric state of excitement" (p. iv), the hostility stage characterized by anger and frustration, the humor stage where one laughs at one's own strange set of circumstances, and the desired final stage of feeling "at home." The sojourner's needs beyond the period of culture shock may call for an additional focus during the intitial orientation program or the extension of the program into the months after he or she arrives in the new culture.

Occasional weekend seminars or workshops might be worthwhile. Basu and Ames (1970) point out that supportive interpersonal relationships with members of the host group are the operative factor in the formation of positive attitudes in a cross-cultural environment. Support groups to promote closer ties between sojourners and permanent residents may help accelerate the passage of the adjustment period. A concern beyond the initial stages of the sojourn is expressed in the work of Marsh (1975) and Brislin and Van Buren (1974). They have coordinated programs which prepare individuals for the return to their home cultures.

Lack of consideration of the individual. Another problem that is characteristic of most programs is the inability (and many times infeasibility) of focussing upon the individual in the training. The fact that sojourners are individuals who will be dealing with other individuals seems overlooked. Intercultural communication does not take place between whole cultures but between individuals. The values of another group that one is taught during orientation may not be the values held by every individual withing that group. The sojourner's motivation for going to another culture, his or her status in both cultures, as well as other distinct characteristics of his or her make-up and circumstances should be considered when training is administered. A borrowing of audience analysis techniques from the public speaking spectrum might prove helpful in tailoring a program to fit individual needs.

Problems in Methodology

In the actual process of conducting the background research for training programs, problems in methodology exist. There are a number of difficulties in trying to systematically collect and organize data on

observable behaviors in other cultures due to the variances in perceptual/interpretive patterns across cultures. It is questionable whether any cross-cultural judgment can be considered entirely accurate (Condon, 1974). Ethnocentricity, even to a slight degree, may interfere with the perceptions of attitudes and behaviors in another culture. As has been seen, there is an abundance of material on the Japanese culture with notably insightful contributions made by Japanese scholars. Efforts in this direction should be sought out and encouraged among native researchers in other countries.

Another methodological issue is whether a concise and homogenous culture can be delineated for measurement. Studies (see Sitaram, 1975) that impose an overriding value structure upon a culture have been criticized for attempting to establish commonality where cultural pluralism exists (Ellingsworth, 1976; Starosta, 1975). Though this may not be as evident in the United States, the dichotomy between classes in Third World countries make it quite unlikely that a national culture can be identified. This was alluded to by Gorden (1968) when he questioned the relevance of communication patterns in Bogota to those in the rest of Colombian culture.

Problems with Philosophical Assumptions

Holladay (1972) carries this issue of heterogeneity within a culture a step further and insists that there be an examination of the primary role which the value system plays in intercultural communication. Its premise that a knowledge of the norms and values of another person's culture is necessary before effective communication can take place is at

the crux of the philosophical rationale behind most training programs. An acceptance of the value structure system implies a belief that value orientation does exist and that value orientations can be observed and codified. Objections to this premise are also twofold: 1) the derivation and validity of values as reliable documented data are questionable, and 2) there are implicit dangers in using values as the "guiding light" of which Sitaram (1977, p. 5) speaks. The problems with validity in establishing values have already been mentioned in relation to Sitaram's study. Even if a set of values has a great deal of consensus in a culture, there is no assurance that they will be reflected in an interaction as communication variables. To illustrate this point, Holladay takes an example from his research in the Mexican American culture; the concept of "machismo," implying male dominance, is commonly listed as a cultural value but it does not follow that the man is the preferred receiver and sender of messages in the home. He accuses the value system as being a "false prophet" for communication, as well as creating an environment for "self-fulfilling prophecy." Preconceived judgments about cultural values may lead to invalid research conclusions, especially in the area of training. Too much reliance upon preconstrued values as a guide to communication may desensitize the communicator to the extent that he or she may become less effective. Holladay concludes his study with this observation: "At best, values are only vague approximations and indicators of communication choices and at worst, they may be completely misleading and be the responsible factor for intercultural communication breakdown." (p. 12)

A Phenomenological Approach to Developing Orientation Programs

Need for Approach

The issues raised in these last sections regarding the need for studies in program effectiveness, the problems in finding a methodology suitable for the intercultural setting, and the controversy about using a value system as the philosophical touchstone of intercultural communication present a challenge to pursue a comprehensive investigation of the components of a "successful" training program. The arguments which undermine the use of value systems and the absence of proven effectiveness of educational approaches in the field present a dilemma for someone preparing to undertake research; one can choose to disregard these factors and proceed to examine the nature of programs based on traditional intercultural training principles, or one can decide to pursue the study with essentially a theoretical tabula rasa. The latter choice reflects the philosophy behind "grounded theory," Glaser and Strauss' work (1967) on alternative qualitative research strategies. In contrast with theory generated by logical deduction from a priori assumptions, their basic premise is that theory can be generated after the data has been collected, codified, and analyzed.

Hawes (1977) defends conducting research using a more phenomenological, rather than positivist, approach. He writes:

> Rather than assuming a presuppositional foundation, the phenomenologist uses the communicative works of members as the media for exposing and interrogating the presuppositional foundation itself . . . . by treating communication works as the constituting media of social worlds, the phenomenologist aims at ever more functional answers and questions. (p. 36)

The positivist uses preconceived logics to direct research and interpret findings; the phenomenologist, on the other hand, interprets data from the perspective of the people being studied and in the terms that they use to account for their actions.

Denzin (1978), taking a symbolic interactionist view of research activity based on George Mead's work (1934), maintains that the phenomenological method "involves a studied commitment to actively enter the world of interacting individuals. It involves an attempt to develop theories about interactions of those studied" (pp. 8-9). By understanding the attitudes held by participants, programs can better meet their needs. The next section will illustrate how a phenomenological approach is more amenable to intercultural research and training.

Rationale for Methodology

Culture is a constantly evolving concept. For this reason, it becomes of paramount importance that the research does not assume a fixed nature. Persons rarely exhibit all the cultural distinctions that one might associate with a given culture, but instead they act as a result of personal influences and also in response to a changing society. Maruyama (1961) argued against the use of the cause-effect paradigm traditionally used in the scientific method. He contends that a researcher using the principle of unidirectional causal relationships will be unable to recognize "the continually ongoing interplay among personal, cultural, and environmental contexts, which is a distinguishing feature of any intercultural communication interaction" (pp. 41-45).

The uniqueness of the intercultural context seems to make it a good candidate for research using grounded theory principles. Ideally the

researcher would gather and examine the data without anticipation of relationships between variables or an expectancy of the group's outcomes. The danger of ethnocentrism entering into the development of the programs would hopefully be diminished by the reliance upon prospective participants and individuals who had been, or presently were, sojourners to provide input concerning personal needs with regard to cultural understanding. In order to clarify how this type of methodology would function, a possible study design is suggested.

Design of study. In southern California, there are hundreds of Japanese businesspeople who come on short term assignments to the United States. For the most part, they work either in a division of a Japanese company or in an American counterpart of their own company. This population of businesspeople is composed almost entirely of males accompanied by their wives and children. It is evident that the needs of the individuals within this group may vary greatly; the situation of the Japanese person working for a totally Japanese branch of an export company will markedly differ from the experience of one who is spending a year learning all the facets of an American-owned computer company. To present the same orientation training to both individuals would be a denial of the exigencies produced by each ones' set of circumstances. The needs of the other family members should also be considered when developing a program.

Primarily, phenomenologically-based studies are people-oriented. Although this may allow for some latitude of freedom as far as research methods that can be used, it demands considerable time and energy. Obser-

vations and interviews are the primary methods of investigation. Denzin (1975) articulated the role of the researcher as a "naturalist" who links "theoretical concepts to the empirical world through the collection of behavior specimens" (p. 103). He also defended the reliability and validity of "naturalistic indicators":

> A reliable observation is one that is not biased by idiosyncrasies of the observer, a research instrument, or a subject, or by the constraints of time and place. A reliable observation is an observation that could have been made by any similarly situated observer. . . A valid observation is one that is theoretically directed and is grounded in the actual behaviors of interacting individuals. Its degree of validity is assessed by its behavioral grounding. The more often it occurs in the actions of those studied, the greater its validity. (p. 105)

Observations made within the different types of work and social environments, reveal behavioral patterns and rules of conduct which can then be communicated more readily to the sojourner. Interviews will be conducted with persons who are currently sojourners, a representative sample of superiors and subordinates in various work situations, and members of the socio-economic group to which the sojourner population belongs. An attempt will be made to devise questions which permit answers that are more definitional in nature and are relatively free of presuppositions with regard to the sojourner's needs and situation.

In analyzing the data that has been gathered, the researcher seeks to discover how these findings produce orderly patterns of interaction and meaning (Garfinkel, 1967). The observations and interviews must be interpreted in order to understand the processes which produced the behaviors that have been recorded. At this point in the analysis, it would be beneficial for the interviewees to provide input on the meaning of their responses, and wherever possible, for those who were observed

to give some type of explanation of their behavior. This involvement will hopefully, as mentioned earlier, function as a safeguard against ethnocentric bias.

Pike (1966) discusses the need to adopt what he terms the "etic and emic viewpoints" when conducting intercultural research. The etic approach consists of criteria that are external to the system and directly measurable. In contrast, the emic approach looks at the system from the inside using criteria that are relative to the internal characteristics of the system. He advocates the use of both in one's research:

> Through the etic "lens" the analyst views the data in tacit reference to a perspective oriented to all comparable events (whether sounds, ceremonies, activities), of all peoples, of all parts of the earth; through the other lens, the emic one, he views the same events, at the same time, in the same context, in reference to a perspective oriented to the particular function of those particular events in that particular culture, as it alone is structured. The result is a kind of "tri-dimensional understanding" of human behavior instead of a "flat" emic one. (p. 157)

An emic perspective places the data in its context and allows statements to be made that are consistent with the interaction in the observed situation. By analyzing data from this approach, it is hoped that patterns will develop indicating the information needed to ascertain the elements of effective training.

Significance of Proposed Study

The phenomenological approach requires a suspension of presuppositional beliefs and a reliance upon descriptive data to provide meaning to a phenomenon. In the design of an orientation program, this methodology permits the researcher to return to the ground floor of theory-construction. This type of research may lead one to discover that an

individual's behavior is rooted in something other than a values based structure, and that orientation training needs to be focused upon other interpersonal or cultural dimensions. Realizing the multiplicity of needs that the various groups of sojourners (as well as individuals within those groups) have, it would be naive to assume that one optimum program design exists. What can be expected is that some theoretical principles will arise which will in turn engender the elements necessary for a particular group to experience effective orientation training.

The phenomenological method encompasses a very complex view of human behavior. By applying this method to the exploration of a person's life, a deeper understanding will be gained of the web of problems resulting from the introduction of additional cultural factors. Aligning the training curriculum with the needs that the sojourner has indicated and which others in his or her world have expressed, would create a program that is satisfactory to its participants both in its design and in its overall results.

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